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THE PLO: A VICTORY IN TERRORISM?

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degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE



by

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ABSTRACT

THE PLO: A VICTORY IN TERRORISM? by MAJ Leonard C. Blevins, USA, 119 pages.

This study, using the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as an illustrative case, investigates whether terrorism has been used to achieve political goals. The study is important because if terrorism has been used in this manner successfully, it may be emulated by others attempting to achieve similar goals.

The study begins with a generic discussion of terrorism and its growth from a national to an international problem. The PLO is then used as a case study to address how successfully terrorism has served as a tool to advance organizational goals from the PLO's formation to the end of the 1980's. The case study discusses the history of the PLO. Then it examines specific terrorist acts aimed at achieving recognition of the organization as the sole representative of the Palestinians by the Palestinians, Arab States, the international community, and --as a key element of PLO strategy--the United States. Conclusions and implications are drawn from this examination. In light of the recent Gulf War and its impact on the PLO, an epilogue is included.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW

OF TERRORISM

At what point shall we expect the approach of danger? By what means shall we fortify against it? Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant, to step the Ocean, and crush us at a blow? Never! All the armies of Europe, Asia and Africa combined, with all the treasure of the earth... could not by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track on the Blue Ridge, in a trail of a thousand years....¹

Abraham Lincoln made this statement in 1838 concerning the status of the US before the Civil War to underscore how only internal threats were a danger to the Union. His statement is relative to the use of terrorism today. Although the US is relatively safe by a major attack from a foreign power, it is vulnerable to terrorism.

What is terrorism? There are numerous definitions. The US Departments of the Army and Air Force define it as "the unlawful use of-- or threatened use of--force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives."²

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, defines terrorism as "the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political means."³ For the purpose of this paper the Department of Defense definition will be used. It defines terrorism as "the calculated use of violence or threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological."⁴

Terrorists are generally categorized as non-state supported, state supported and state directed. Non-state supported terrorist groups are those that operate autonomously, receiving no significant support from any government. A state supported terrorist group operates independently but receives support from one or more governments. The state directed terrorist operates as an agent of a government, receiving intelligence, logistics and operational support from that government.⁵ It is not uncommon for a government to direct these terrorists against its own population.

Terrorism is basically a tactic. It constitutes actions taken by a state against its own population, by a minority to achieve goals that it feels are otherwise unachievable, or actions by a disenfranchised population

against what it perceives as an abusive government. Its causes are often very "good" ones as defined by the West, such as religious conviction or political representation. The problem is that the use of violence, usually against innocent victims, is terrorism's means.

Terrorism has become a major instrument in protracted political warfare that exists within an environment of neither war nor peace. It is designed to achieve political ends, falling into the lower end of the spectrum of conflict. This is an area where political, economic, and psychological considerations play a more important role than does conventional military power.⁶

The basic political aim of the terrorist is to undermine confidence in the ability of a targeted government or society to provide basic security. The goal is to create economic and political dislocation that will render that government incapable of governing or forcing it at the very least to act upon terrorist demands or issues. It can also be used to undermine political support of one nation for another, or to force a government to take certain actions favorable to the terrorist.⁷

Terrorism remains a critical US and international concern. 1989 witnessed 4,352 incidents of terrorism. Although this was a significant drop from the previous

year, it still shows the seriousness of the issue. The incidents resulted in the deaths of 8,181 people and the wounding of 5,535 others.⁸

These acts of violence were not limited to one area of the world, but represent an international problem. Latin America had the greatest number of incidents with 1949. The other areas affected were Asia with 1191 incidents, Europe with 446, the Middle East/North Africa with 491, Sub Sahara Africa with 271, and North America with 4.⁹

While terrorist incidents in the US are very limited, American citizens were the target of 105 international incidents resulting in 13 deaths and 19 injuries. Today there are over 700,000 US Government military and civilian personnel plus dependents stationed overseas. The targeting of our interests requires action to protect these citizens.¹⁰

Terrorists appear to favor certain means of violence over others. In the past, they have relied most frequently on bombings, accounting for 44 percent of the total. Assassinations, another favorite tool, totalled 22 percent and kidnapping accounted for 3 percent of the incidents.¹¹

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. It has accompanied man throughout his history and has evolved in

scope, approach and sophistication over the years. 1968 is usually used as the dividing line for the emergence of terrorism on the international scale. Prior to that time, terrorism was basically a regional tactic usually limited to the targeted country or government.

The Tupamaros of Uruguay are an excellent example of pre-1968 terrorism. They are credited with inventing the original model for what has become the fashion in urban guerilla warfare. Their Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional (MLN) was founded in 1963. At that time Uruguay was a progressive Latin American country. Although far from a utopia, it was generally free of the misery and injustice that dominated other Latin American countries. It was a parliamentary republic proud of its liberty and social enlightenment. The literacy rate was 90 percent, health care was the best in Latin America, the infant mortality rate was the lowest, their social insurance system was the oldest in existence outside of Sweden, and the workers were represented by well-established trade unions. 12

The Tupamaros were radical Marxists motivated by a strong sense of social guilt and an uplifting political vision. Teachers, lawyers, doctors, dentists, accountants, bankers, architects, engineers, a model, a radio announcer, and an actress comprised their membership. Initially they tried to work within the trade unions to promote their new

society. When this proved unsuccessful they resorted to "Robin Hood" tactics. They would hijack a supermarket truck and hand out free food to the needy; gambling casinos were robbed and the booty distributed to the poor.¹³

Despite these efforts, the Tupamaros never enjoyed overwhelming support of the masses. They never had more than three thousand members. This accounted for a tenth of one percent of the population.¹⁴

As a consequence of the ineffectiveness of earlier tactics, in 1970 they resorted to violence. The Tupamaros bombed, burned, robbed, and kidnapped in an attempt to further their cause. Over two years they conducted three hundred assaults, finally accomplishing their goal of ending the democratic form of government. The frightened left-wing government declared a state of internal war, suspended all civil rights and called in the military.¹⁵

The army quickly defeated the Tupamaros: in a little over three months, 2,600 Tupamaros were in prison, 40 were dead, and the remainder fled the country. The movement was defeated. As for Uruguay, it was now a military dictatorship. For the next fifteen years the military deprived all parties of their political rights.¹⁶

Today the Tupamaros are used as an instructive example of terrorism. They are inaccurately remembered by

many terrorist groups as freedom fighters who opposed a military dictatorship. They were regional terrorists who never struck targets outside the borders of Uruguay who are now homeless exiles.¹⁷

In 1968, terrorism burst onto the international scene, due in part to technological advancements. The introduction of satellite television enabled a terrorist to grab the attention of the world within seconds of the activity. Innovations in transportation like jet aircraft enhanced terrorist mobility, providing a field of operations undreamed of earlier. The jet also proved a lucrative target for terrorists, with 400 potential hostages packed in a metal shell. The development of hard-to-detect plastic explosives and compact automatic weapons eased the problem of transporting tools of the trade. The feeling that no one was immune from terrorism was born. International travelers and workers were now targets. The terrorist had new and more effective tools to achieve the fear that his effectiveness was founded upon.¹⁸

International communications also allowed terrorists to develop an international training base: they began to support and train each other or win sponsorship from governments with temporarily intersecting agendas; international borders were no longer of consequence to them; it was easy to find a "friendly" safe house anywhere

targets took them; and exchange of tactics and equipment was easier and more effective. As a consequence of these factors, nonterritorial terrorism was born.¹⁹

Another factor that contributed to the emergence of terrorism in the international arena was the general ambience of the late sixties and seventies. Mao Tse-tung spoke of guerillas living among peasants like fish in a sea, an image that captured the imagination of some radical students and groups, and in any event came to characterize the approach of terrorists around the world. Europe experienced the student riots of 1968. When these riots appeared to fail, some of the students took to violence. Irish violence was on the rise in England and Northern Ireland. America's young men were reacting violently to being drafted to fight an unpopular war in Vietnam. Arab groups, dismayed at the failed attempts of the combined Arab armies to drive Israel into the sea, resorted to terrorism as their only means to wage war against Israel and quickly exported their violence to Europe.²⁰

This ambience, coupled with advancements in communications, created a terrorist community of international proportion. Although, in the 70s, this was viewed by some as a worldwide plot, the conspiracy theory fell into disreput during the 1980s.²¹

While terrorism is a truly international issue it appears to favor democratic countries as targets since the very nature of democracy allows terrorists greater freedom of action. No democratic country is immune to terrorist acts. It is therefore important to understand terrorist acts and their goals, for by understanding the acts and their motivations or purpose, a counter-terrorist policy can be established.²²

Success breeds success. Terrorism will continue to be a weapon of the weak if they see a chance of success. Terrorists will go to school and learn from the mistakes and successes of their predecessors. Those who wish to combat terrorism must also learn from history, studying acts as well as the whys and wherefores of terrorism to learn how to combat them.

A helpful step in studying terrorism is to identify the terrorist organizations that exist throughout the world. No region of the world is immune from the effects of terrorism, but a few areas and their dominant groups are worth noting here.

Middle East terrorism revolves around the issues of a Palestinian homeland, Israel's existence and policies, Arab states jockeying for power, sectarian strife, religious extremism, and regional conflicts like the Iraq-Iran War or

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The best known organization, the PLO, will be discussed at length later.²³

Another prominent organization is the Islamic Jihad, the stated political objectives of which are to establish a revolutionary Shi'a Islamic state in Lebanon similar to Iran, to eliminate non-Islamic influences and force Western interests out of the region, and to become institutionalized as Lebanon's principal Islamic political and religious movement. They are most famous for the 1983 suicide bombing attacks on the American and French military barracks in Beirut, which accounted for 241 US and 56 French deaths. The Islamic Jihad is also responsible for the kidnapping of some of the Westerners presently held in Beirut.²⁴

Western European terrorists are considered urban terrorist. Most espouse a revolutionary philosophy, usually some form of Marxism-Leninism. They are dedicated to overthrowing the existing government or social order but are vague or inarticulate about their vision of a substitute system. Their activities are usually carried out by a small nucleus. Some groups like the West German Red Army Faction are highly structured, while others like the West German Revolutionary Cells are loosely organized. They all target the state, its representatives, or symbols

of the established order. Their targets are selected very deliberately for their symbolic value.²⁵

Probably the most famous Western European organization is the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). Its political objectives are to establish a unified Ireland under a Socialist government, undermine British support for Northern Ireland remaining in the United Kingdom through a campaign of terror, and convince the international Irish community to support it. Its targets are primarily British, with attrition and terrorism its primary tactics.²⁶

Terrorism in Latin America is oftentimes the indicator of an initial phase of an insurgent movement with the goal of a full fledged guerilla warfare campaign. It may also be used as a fallback if insurgencies appear to be failing. Additionally, terrorist acts are perpetrated in support of groups operating openly as legitimate political players. Recently narcotics traffickers have added a new twist to terrorism in Latin America. To date most Latin American terrorist have tended to be very nationalistic and have not engaged in extensive transnational terrorism. Terrorism driven by narcotics trafficking is the exception.²⁷

One of the largest Latin American organizations is the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) with approximately 7,500 members. It operates mainly within El Salvador. Its political objectives are to create and sustain a war of attrition against the elected Government of El Salvador; to cause its destruction and replacement by a leftist, pro-Cuban, anti-US state; and to frustrate US support of the Salvadoran Government. It attempts to stimulate domestic US opposition to policies through periodic attacks on American military personnel serving in El Salvador.²⁸

Another well known Latin American organization is the Shining Path in Peru. Its political objectives are to stimulate a peasant armed struggle that will lead to the overthrow of the current constitutional government and install a leftist, ethnic Indian state by the year 2000, and to eliminate foreign influence in Peru. It has attacked US, Soviet, Chinese and other interests in Peru.²⁹

Asian terrorists are hard to characterize. Two major groups serve as examples of the extremes in this area: the Filipino Communists and the Sri Lankan Tamil guerillas.³⁰

The military wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army (NPA), uses

calculated and precise terror tactics to intimidate the population and eliminate key government officials. Hit teams known as "sparrow" units are used to carry out assassinations. Targets appear to be carefully analyzed for their political and tactical benefits. Its political goal is to replace the current socio-political system with a Maoist Communist regime.³¹

The Tamil separatist insurgents of Sri Lanka use terrorism in a widespread, seemingly indiscriminate manner. Their main political objective is to create a separate Tamil state in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. Bombings, assassinations, and assaults against civilian targets are common.³²

This short list of terrorist organizations shows the difficulty of categorizing terrorism. Terrorist groups differ in their aims, strategies, organization, capabilities, and other attributes.³³ Nevertheless there appear to be some common characteristics in most terrorist organizations. Compromise is not a tactic that they understand, settling for nothing less than the full realization of their goals. In the pursuit of their goals, they do not recognize innocents, identifying anyone who does not support them as the enemy. Security is a major concern leading them to use cellular organizations where

the operatives know as few of the members of the organization as possible.

Terrorism will continue to thrive as long as the practitioners expect some degree of success. In order to properly combat terrorism, a strategy must be formed based on current knowledge of terrorist groups. The scope of this paper does not allow an examination of every terrorist group. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is selected as a case study.

The PLO has been selected for many reasons. It is one of most long-lasting and well-known practitioners of terrorism. It has been a pioneer in terrorist innovations, performing the first airplane hijacking, the first midair bombing of a jet, the first attack on the Olympics, and the first modern seizure of an embassy. It was instrumental in the birth of international terrorism in 1968 with a airplane hijacking, and has become the role model for terrorists everywhere.³⁴ The Middle East is of special strategic concern to the US because of the vast oil reserves located there. Peace in the area and a positive US-Arab relationship have been slowed because of the Palestinian issue.

ENDNOTES

¹Geoffrey C. Ward, The Civil War. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1990), i.

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¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Claire Sterling, The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1981), 18.

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¹⁴Sterling, 18-19.

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¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne Counterattack: The West's Battle Against the Terrorist (New York, Facts on File, Inc., 1982), viii.

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²⁰Scerling, 11-12.

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²²Ibid., xiv.

²³Terrorist Group Profiles, 3.

²⁴Ibid., 15

²⁵Rosie, 150-152.

²⁶Terrorist Group Profiles, 56.

²⁷Ibid., 74.

²⁸Ibid., 82.

²⁹Ibid., 106.

³⁰Rosie, 22.

³¹Ibid.

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³⁴Robert Kupperman and Jeff Kamen, Final Warning: Averting Disaster in the New Age of Terrorism (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 42.

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORY OF THE

PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

The Palestinians are now in the mood of sacrificing their lives if by wrecking the pillar, they can bring the roof down on their Israeli enemies' heads; and if the crushing masonry were incidentally to stave in the skulls of the rest of the human race, why should the Palestinians care? 1

The most logical way to attempt to understand a philosophy of violence expressed here by Palestinian author, Hatem Hussaini, is to start with the background or history of an organization.

A discussion of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) naturally begins with a discussion of Palestine. There has never been a sovereign state defined by political or geographic boundaries that has been called Palestine. The area referred to by this term is generally understood as the area occupied by present-day Israel.

The Middle East, particularly the area of present day Israel or Palestine, has been the breeding ground for more violence than any other area or region on earth. Wars have been waged there since the dawn of civilization. It is considered holy to three prominent world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Religion has tended to foster bitter hatreds and violent passions that have contributed to the fierceness of the conflicts.²

Palestine has been an area of conquerors. Nomads inhabited the land as far back as 1500 BC. The first organized society in the area was the kingdom of the Jewish people beginning in the thirteenth century BC. The Jews, known then as Israelites, did not find the land empty. Tribes known as Canaanites inhabited the land and were defeated by the Israelites.³

The Jews were defeated several times by warring nations but continued to occupy the land as their homeland until 70 AD, when they were defeated by the Romans. A minority of Jews remained in Palestine with the majority being dispersed throughout the world. This dispersion is referred to as the Jewish Diaspora.⁴

The dismemberment of the Roman Empire put Palestine under Byzantine rule in 395. Since then, Palestine has been ruled by the Arabs (636-1071), Seljuk Turks (1072-99),

Crusaders (1099-1291), Egyptian Mamelucks (1291-1517), and Ottoman Turks (1517-1917). With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, Palestine came under the protection of the British government.⁵

The organized movement for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine began in 1897. A Jewish delegation under Theodor Herzl met with the Sultan of Turkey to discuss the proposed state. The Sultan rejected the idea.⁶

This refusal did not end the dream of a homeland. Many Jews, reacting to Herzl's vision and prompted by anti-semitic pogroms in Russia and Poland, immigrated to Palestine. These immigrants purchased land from Arabs. Baron de Rothchild, a wealthy philanthropist, purchased large plots for Jewish pioneers from absentee Arab landlords. The process was further aided by money collected by the Zionist organization. By 1914 almost 100,000 acres of Palestinian land had been purchased and 60,000 Jewish immigrants lived in settlements there.⁷

The Arabs had fought against Turkey during World War I in hopes that upon defeat of the Ottoman Empire the Arab lands would be independent. Britain agreed to this independence with certain reservations and exclusion of territory that was not considered entirely Arab. The

promises to the Arabs were lost in competition between Britain and France for control in the area after the war. The Anglo-French Agreement signed in September 1919 divided the area of Palestine between the French and British, dealing a crushing blow to Arab dreams of independence. The Arabs did not give up hope and continued to resist French and British mandates for their duration.⁸

On November 2, 1917, British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour wrote a letter to Lord Lionel Walter Rothchild. This document, known as the Balfour Declaration, basically stated that Great Britain would favor a Jewish state in Palestine. This declaration was accepted by the League of Nations, which agreed to give Britain a mandate over Palestine in 1922.⁹

Jewish settlement in the area of Palestine was not totally peaceful. The Arabs in the area began to react violently to increased emigration. To appease the Arabs, Jewish emigration was limited and new settlements put on hold by the British White Paper of 1939. This limited Jewish emigration to a total of 75,000 for the next five years.¹⁰

World War II took the attention of the British to other areas. The vast and horrifying scale of Jewish persecution by Nazi Germany increased Jewish desire for a

homeland. This overwhelming desire, coupled with the violence in Palestine between Arabs and Jews, Arabs and British, and Jews and British, was instrumental in making the British mandate untenable. In April 1947, Britain weary of the continued violence and Jewish and Arab refusal to compromise, turned the problem over to the United Nations.¹¹

The United Nations drew up a plan to partition Palestine into two independent states, one Jewish and the other Arab. The city of Jerusalem was to be given special international status and, as such, not belong to either. The Arabs rejected this plan but it was accepted by the Jews.¹²

Jewish groups in Palestine used the opportunity provided by the last few months of the British mandate to improve their position. They siezed land and tried to get as many Arabs as possible to leave, sometimes resorting to violence and other scare tactics to accomplish this. It is estimated that from the announcement of the UN partiton plan in late 1947 to the end of the British mandate in May 1948, between 300,000 to 400,000 Arabs left their homes in Palestine, giving birth to the Palestinian refugee problem.¹³

In May 1948, the British left Palestine. Two hours before the termination of the mandate, at 4 pm on 14 May 1948, the state of Israel declared its independence. That night the combined Arab armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, and Lebanon invaded the new state. Israel survived this attack and went on to be victorious in this and three subsequent Arab-Israeli conflicts in 1956, 1967, and 1973.¹⁴

The Palestinian diaspora occurred as a result of the establishment and survival of the state of Israel. The causes for this diaspora are still debated. Many left under orders from the grand mufti in Jerusalem, the religious and political leader of the Arab people. They expected to return with the victorious Arab armies to reclaim their land. Some left just to escape the violence of war. As stated earlier, many were coerced into leaving by the Jews. The Israelis forced many to leave in order to establish security belts. The massacre of Arab civilians at Deir Yassin in April 1948 by elements of the Irgun and Stern Groups terrorized many into leaving their homes for the safety of friendly Arab nations.¹⁵

More than a million of these refugees ended up in squalid refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria. These states, which had championed their cause, were unable or unwilling to absorb them into their population. Many did move to other Arab countries and became successful

doctors, lawyers, bankers, engineers, teachers, and journalists. Today there are approximately 5.5 million Palestinians. The largest concentrations are in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait, Syria, and Israel. There are approximately one million who remain in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank.¹⁶

These people still look to an area of the world, known to them as Palestine, as their historic homeland. Many look to a time when they can return to claim what they feel is rightfully theirs. The support or representation of these people by Arab nations is at best scattered. From time to time, Syria and Jordan have attempted to speak for them with less than successful results. An organization that claims to represent this homeless people is the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The PLO and its military arm, the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), were created by the Arab Summit Conference in Cairo in January 1964. The Arab League intended for this organization to serve as a military weapon in its attempt to destroy Israel. The PLA was envisioned as the main arm, consisting of three light infantry brigades stationed in Egypt, Iraq and Syria. Ahmed Shukairy, former Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United Nations, was appointed leader. The main force

behind the formation of the organization was Gamal Abdel Nasser, then president of Egypt.¹⁷

The first meeting of the organization took place from May 28 through June 2, 1964 in East Jerusalem. The meeting was attended by 388 Palestinian delegates and by representatives of the Arab League, as well as representatives of all Arab countries with the exception of Saudi Arabia. They published the Palestinian Charter or National Charter, which called for the reestablishment of Palestine and the eradication of Israel.¹⁸

The beginnings of the PLO are generally agreed on by all parties; however, the agreement usually ends here. There are differences of opinion on exactly what the PLO is and what it represents.

The PLO defines itself as a "democratically elected, progressive organization that governs the political, economic, and social affairs of the Palestinian people."¹⁹ The US Department of Defense, in 1990, described the PLO as an umbrella group that includes a number of differing constituent groups and individuals who hold differing and often opposing views on terrorism.²⁰

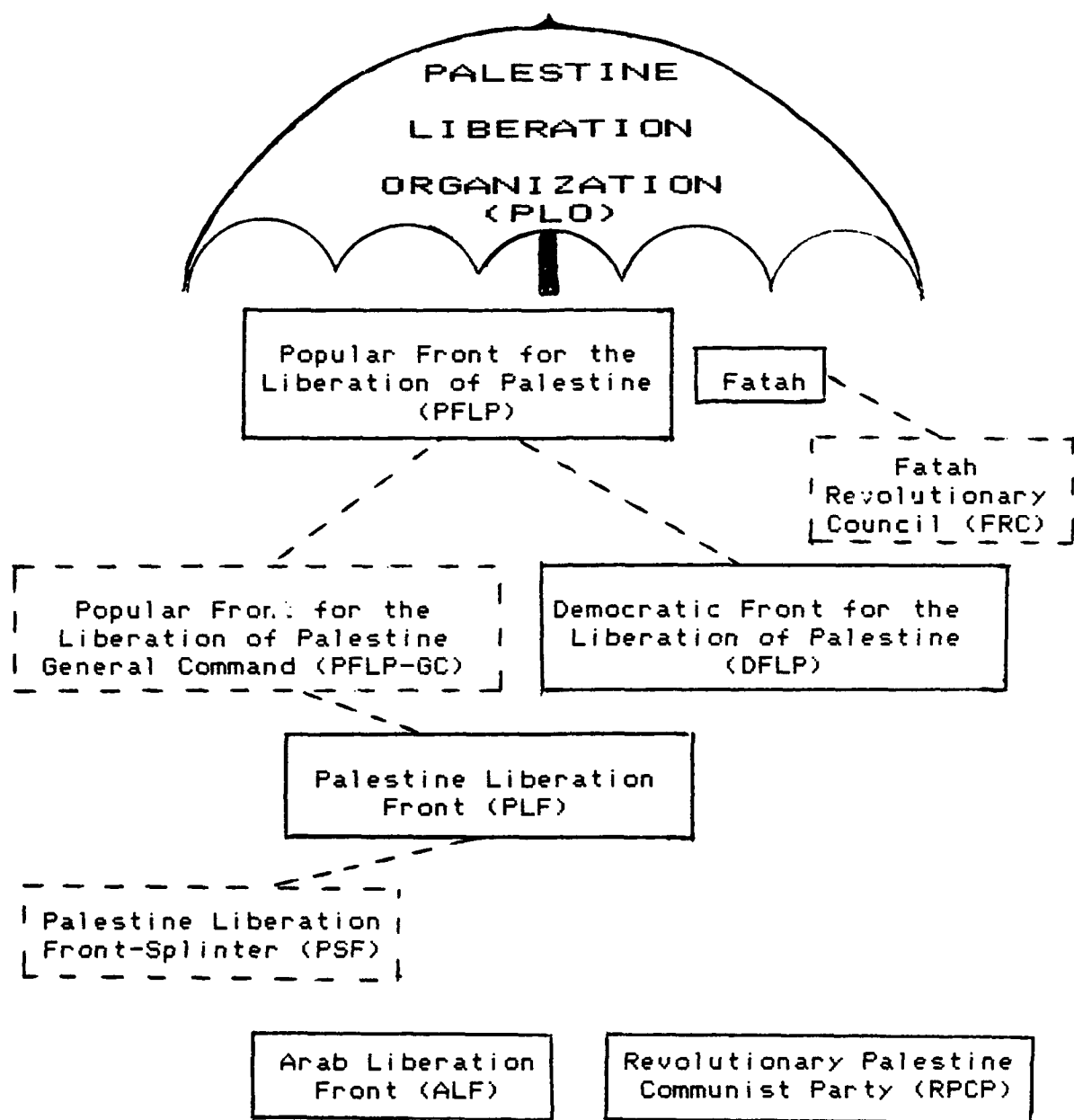
The PLO consists of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), which acts as the decision making body of the PLO. At last count the PNC had 430 members representing

various segments of the Palestinian community, as well as members of armed militias and terrorist groups. The PNC elects a Central Council of 60 to 70 members to formalize or ratify decisions. The PNC also elects a 15-man Executive Committee which conducts the day to day business of the PLO.²¹

The remainder of this chapter will deal with the terrorist organizations that fall under the umbrella of the PLO (figure 2-1). It is only fair to note that the PLO also involves itself in the social and human concerns of the Palestinian people in exile. The organizations established include the Education Department, the Palestinian Red Crescent, Samed (the economic institution), the General Union of Palestinian Workers, the General Union of Palestinian Women, the Association for Theatre and Popular Arts, the Cinema Section, and several newspapers.²²

The Palestinian National Covenant is the document that governs the activities of the PLO. This document calls for an armed struggle as the only way to liberate Palestine from the Zionist occupiers. The PLO has used terrorism in this armed struggle.²³

As stated earlier, the PLO is actually an umbrella organization with numerous terrorist organizations represented in its membership. In order to understand the



Key

Splinter Group

Group not under PLO umbrella

Group under PLO umbrella

Figure 2-1

PLO, a description of the organizations that comprise the PLO is necessary.

The most dominant group in the PLO is Harakat Tahir Falastin (Movement for the Liberation of Palestine) better known as Al Fatah (Conquest). It was formed in 1959, prior to the PLO itself, by three Palestinian nationalist students: Yassir Arafat, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), and the late Khalik al-Wazir (Abu Jihad). Fatah has the largest support base of all Palestinian armed resistance groups. IT has enjoyed a membership of up to 15,000 people. Since 1970, Fatah has become the major power center and dominant group within the PLO, with Chairman Arafat being both the head of the PLO and Fatah.²⁴

Throughout its history Fatah has tried to disclaim the terrorist label and retain legitimacy as a movement of national liberation. This has limited its range of terrorist activities. The organization tries to avoid Arab quarrels and focus on Palestinian nationalism. Because of this posture it has been accused of being too parochial, too conservative, and insufficiently militant by other organizations within the PLO. Several splinter groups have broken off from Fatah to pursue more militant activities.²⁵

Fatah originally pursued its goals through political initiatives until 1965, when it began its first terrorist operations. It has conducted kidnappings, installation attacks, bombings, assassinations, and aircraft hijackings resulting in 300 deaths and 500 wounded as of December 1988. These operations have been conducted in the Middle East, Europe, and elsewhere with sanctuaries in Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Libya, Tunisia, Iraq and Yemen. Fatah appears to engage in terrorist activities with little enthusiasm. It conducts enough operations to satisfy extremists, but not enough to alienate moderates.²⁶

Fatah operates in a cellular organization. Cells are organized into student, worker and refugee committees linked through regional committees located throughout the world. These, in turn, report to a Military and Revolutionary Council that reports to a Central Committee and National Congress. Fatah has extensive relationships with terrorist and revolutionary groups around the world, including Germany's Red Army Faction, Italy's Red Brigades, Japans Red Army, and Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) separatists in Spain.²⁷

Fatah has a more conservative ideology than other members of the PLO. It has a simple nationalist agenda demanding a Palestinian state. Originally it called for the elimination of Israel and recapturing all of

Palestine, but since 1984 has hinted that it may accept a state based on a Gaza/ West Bank formulation. This agenda must be independent of other nations and political parties. Its immediate objectives are to defend itself, maintain the PLO political base, weaken Israel politically and militarily, gain international attention for the Palestinian cause, and restore a sense of national identity. It believes that revolutionary violence carried out by the masses is necessary to liberate the homeland, and that the conflict will be protracted.²⁸

In 1974 the Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC), under the leadership of Abu Nidal, split from Fatah. It established its headquarters in Baghdad. The first terrorist activity began in 1976, targeting Syrian objectives against the backdrop of the Syrian invasion of Lebanon. It acted against Palestinian targets from 1978-80 and attacked its first Jewish target in 1980 by assassinating the Israeli Commercial Attache in Brussels. FRC advocates the most extreme form of Pan-Arab nationalism: namely that Israel must be destroyed, Palestine liberated to become part of an Arab nation, and that Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon are inseparable parts of Syria. It is opposed to a negotiated peace settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict and has targeted moderate

Palestinians and Arabs, Israelis, and Westerners who promote a political solution.²⁹

The FRC is one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations with an extensive area of operations. Because of his targeting of pro-Arafat Palestinians, Abu Nidal was actually sentenced to death by Arafat. Reconciliation with Fatah began in 1987 with the signing of the Tripoli Document, brokered by Libya's Khaddafi, to achieve a united front among Palestinian resistance groups. This agreement signals a possible end to the violent rift between the PLO and FRC, but to date FRC maintains its independence from the PLO.³⁰

Another important group in the PLO is the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). It was established in 1967 by the merging of three factions of the Arab National Movement headed by George Habbash, Naif Hawatmeh, and Ahmed Jibril. Shortly after this merger Hawatmeh and Jibril left to establish their own organizations, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine- General Command.³¹

The PFLP has a Marxist-Leninist ideology with a nationalist flavor. The Palestinian cause is viewed as an integral part of the world revolution against imperialism,

reactionist regimes, and Zionism. A strategy of international terror is considered justified against these targets. It has been a pioneer of international terrorism, conducting more international attacks in 1968-72 than any other group. It opposes any political solution to the Palestinian problem.³²

The PFLP left the PLO in 1974 in protest of the political line endorsed by Arafat to limit terrorist activities to Israel. It later rejoined the organization in recognition of the need for national unity. In 1983 PFLP supported Arafat when a mutiny over appointments of two officers to high PLO positions broke out within Fatah. The PFLP considered the accord signed in February 1985 between Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan over Palestinian sovereignty in the West Bank to be a threat to the Palestinian cause and interest, and George Habbash left to join the Palestine National Salvation Front (PNSF), an anti-Arafat coalition. The Arafat-Hussein accord was canceled in 1986, enabling the rapprochement of the PNSF and the PLO and the return of the PFLP to the PLO executive committee.³³

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine: General Command (PFLP-GC) was established in 1968 as a result of a split from PFLP. In 1974 it broke with the PLO and joined the PNSF. The objectives of the PFLP-GC are to

destroy Israel and establish an independent Palestine. It commits acts of terror against Israeli citizens and opposes any move toward moderation in the Palestinian movement.³⁴

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) was formed in 1969 as a splinter organization of the PFLP. It has a Marxist-Leninist ideological base and believes that the Palestinian national goal cannot be achieved without a revolution of the working class. It advocates an international stance that places the Palestinian struggle within the general world context of liberation in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It remains in the Executive Committee of the PLO.³⁵

The Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) was formed in 1977 in opposition to PFLP-GC support for the Syrian invasion of Lebanon. It unsuccessfully tried to gain control of the PFLP-GC in September 1976, and officially split from the organization in April 1977 with the help of Arafat. Near the end of 1983, the PLF itself split when Abu al Abbas felt that the organization was becoming too close to Syria. Abbas took his faction to Tunis and aligned himself with Arafat and the mainstream Fatah organization. The organization further split in January 1984 when Abd al Fatah Ghanem attempted a takeover of the PLF offices and held Tal'at Yaqub, Secretary General of the PLF, hostage. The Syrians intervened and Yaqub was released. Ghanem

formed his own faction with links to Libya. The three factions of the PLF share the same basic goals of dismantling the current state of Israel, terrorizing Israel by direct attacks on its soil, and establishing an independent Palestinian state in place of Israel.³⁵

The Popular Struggle Front (PSF) was formed in 1967 by Bahjat Abu Gharbiyah. It has drifted from within the scope of the PLO to an independent organization. PSF activities were suspended after the Jordanian suppression of 1970 but revived after the 1973 War. The PSF calls for an armed struggle to liberate Palestine, eliminate Israel, and create a democratic secular state in all of the former British Mandate territory of Palestine. To this end it opposes the creation of a ministate on the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It emphasizes an Arab nationalist approach in combating Zionist forces.³⁶

The Arab Liberation Front (ALF) is led by Abd al-Rahmin Ahmad, who often speaks officially for the PLO and represents Arafat on diplomatic missions. The ALF was founded in 1969 and has between 500 and 800 members. It is headquartered in Baghdad and generally supports an independent Palestinian state in confederation with Jordan. It is funded and controlled by Iraq's Ba'ath Party.³⁷

The Revolutionary Palestinian Communist Party (RPCP) is a significant element of the PLO, with representatives on all major committees, including the Executive Committee. It boasts 5,000 members located in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the occupied territories. It is not known to have performed any terrorist acts.³⁸

The Sa'iqa (Pioneers of the Popular War of Liberation) was formed in 1968 by the Syrian Ba'ath Party. It was formed to provide a mechanism for Syria to control and influence the Palestinian movement. Its stated goal was to eliminate Israel and replace it with a pro-Syrian Palestinian state. It was a member of the PLO until 1983, when it broke with Arafat's leadership.³⁹

An organization known as Black September has been linked to the PLO. The best known act by this organization was the 1972 attack on the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics. The PLO has disavowed any connection with this group and alleges that it broke from Fatah over political issues. After being captured in Jordan in 1972, Abu Daoud, a top Black September operator involved in the Munich Massacre, admitted that the organization was a covert arm of Jihaz el-Razd, the intelligence and reconnaissance department of Fatah.⁴⁰

From this list of the organizations that are, or have been, members of the PLO, it is very easy to see the diversity and ideological differences contained within the umbrella of the PLO. This has proven to be both a strength and a weakness. The obvious weakness is the in-fighting and lack of unity exhibited by the PLO to the international community. One strength is that the PLO has gained the advantage of being more representative of Palestinian opinion and being able to count on support when attacked from outside.⁴¹ Another strength is the aspect of plausible deniability. A terrorist act committed by the PLO that backfires or stirs too much negative publicity can simply be blamed on a renegade arm of the organization, as shown in the example of Black September.

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CHAPTER 3

THE PLO AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

The PLO may be distrusted, disowned and despised, but it is a reality, if for no other reason than that it has no rival organization among Palestinians. As long as this reality persists, it will have to be reckoned with in any future multilateral negotiating process.¹

This is a statement made by Senator Adlai Stevenson (D-Ill) after meeting Yaser Arafat during a trip to the Middle East in 1980. It shows the complexity of the PLO in Middle East politics. The Palestinians may not totally embrace the philosophies or activities of the PLO, but it does not have another organization to turn to. This also points to a recognition problem for the PLO. Its ultimate political victory would be the establishment of a separate independent Palestinian State. There also are intermediate political objectives that it must achieve prior to the recognition of this goal, including establishing itself in the eyes of the Palestinians as the only representative of their nationalistic goals.

The PLO has attempted to achieve representation of the Palestinians in three general ways. It has (1) instituted an indoctrination effort through its education program, (2) performed terrorist acts against Israel and (3) attempted to silence any opposition from the Palestinians themselves. Terrorism has been a major tactic in the pursuit of this goal. The remainder of this chapter will examine each of these in detail.

The PLO has within its structure an education department. Its stated goals are to educate the Palestinians and to help them rediscover their heritage and culture.² These institutions also teach the youngsters its philosophy of return. On the surface this seems like a harmless philosophy; however, it justifies any means to accomplish this dream. This philosophy of return can best be illustrated by the following statement:

I shall see the hatred in the eyes of my son and your sons. I shall see how they take revenge. If they do not know how to take revenge, I shall teach them. And if they agree to a truce or peace, I shall fight against them as I fight against my enemies or theirs. I want them to be callous, to be ruthless, to take revenge. I want them to wash away the disaster of 1948 with the blood of those who prevent them from entering their land. Their homeland is dear to them, but revenge is dearer. We'll enter their lairs in Tel Aviv. We'll smash Tel Aviv with axes, guns, hands, fingernails, and teeth, while singing... We shall sing the hymns of the triumphant, avenging return.³

The PLO indoctrinates Palestinian youth with this type of philosophy. It can then draw from this pool of youths for operatives to carry out its terrorist acts, or at least justify these actions in the eyes of the people it claims to represent. This is an example of how the PLO uses a social program to strengthen the politico-military aspect of its organization.

Another way the PLO attempts to win the confidence of Palestinians is through terrorist acts it performs against Israel. The goals of these acts appear to be twofold. First, by attacking the Zionist state, the PLO demonstrates to the Palestinians that it possesses the ability to wage a guerilla war against Israel with some degree of success. Second, the PLO appears to conduct these acts to provoke Israel into some form of retaliation. This retaliation helps to further alienate the Israelis and Palestinians and to solidify the Palestinians behind the PLO.

The PLO began its terrorist activities against Israel on January 2, 1965. On that night a small group of men entered a hut near the Jordanian border village of Shuna. Three men were dressed in khaki uniforms and carried weapons. They received final instructions and departed on their mission. They crossed the Jordan River into Israel at a point south of the Sea of Galilee.

Israeli border surveillance at this point was rather sporadic and the infiltrators had little chance of encountering a patrol.⁴

They made their way farther west, and at a predetermined point turned north. Their mission was to blow up the Ilbon pumping station, part of Israel's forty million dollar National Water Carrier, which transported water from the Jordan River and Sea of Galilee in the north to the arid desert in southern Israel. The choice of this target was symbolic in that the use of water from the Jordan River was a source of frustration for the Arab nations and the irrigation project stood as a symbol of Israel's ingenuity. The diversion of water from the river had been the main topic of debate at the Arab summit in 1964.⁵

When the infiltrators reached their objective, they found that the pumping station was heavily guarded by Israeli border patrols and Druze watchmen. They decided that the mission was too difficult and dangerous. Instead of attempting to blow up the pumping station, the three threw their explosives into an open channel, hoping that they would flow into a nearby tunnel and explode there. The timing mechanism on the explosives malfunctioned and the charge never detonated.⁶

The next day an Israeli worker spotted a mysterious object floating in a irrigation canal. The package was removed and an investigation revealed that the brown package with Arabic markings contained ten sticks of the explosive gelignite attached to a timing mechanism consisting of a large Japanese-made alarm clock. Police scouts were able to pick up the tracks of the saboteurs and followed them to the Jordan River, where they apparently crossed back into Jordan and disappeared.⁷

The Israelis did not report the incident at the time because the identity of the saboteurs was a mystery. The mystery was solved by a Radio Cairo broadcast on January 13, 1965. The broadcast included the following:

This is an announcement of Fatah. A force from the first unit of the Third Company attacked the Jordan River diversion installation and succeeded in damaging installations in the Ilbon station's tunnel and the Bet Netofa valley.⁸

Although the actual terrorist act was unsuccessful, it marked the beginning of the war of the PLO on Israel. It also showed that the PLO did not necessarily need success as long as its propoganda tool was functioning. Prior to the beginning of these hostilities the borders of Israel with its Arab neighbors had been relatively quiet since the end of the 1956 conflict. Obviously this peaceful existence for Israel was an irritant to the PLO and the Palestinians. The PLO had opened a new front of

independent guerilla actions by Palestinians against Israel.

The PLO improved its operations from this unsuccessful beginning. Between January 1965 and September 1979, a total of 1,207 people were killed and 2,950 wounded in all PLO operations, including arson, bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, shootings, hijackings, and miscellaneous incidents.⁹ The targets were not always Jews, but the PLO had established its ability to engage its forces in a guerrilla war on Israeli soil.

The PLO has enjoyed limited success in mounting terrorist assaults by small numbers of operatives into Israel. Its forces are often intercepted by Israeli security forces before they can accomplish their mission. It has attempted to infiltrate by sea, hot-air balloons and hang gliders. Most have been intercepted. This led the PLO to institute a new technique around 1985. It started distributing weapons to young men within Israel and encouraged these men to make opportune attacks on solitary Israelis. These attacks, sometimes referred to as 'do it yourself' terrorism, are far more difficult to stop than organized terrorist activities.¹⁰

The normal way for men and women of the armed forces in Israel to get around is by hitch-hiking. This

made them a prime target of the opportunistic terrorist. In addition, bombs were planted on buses and grenades thrown in crowded streets. In the first six months of 1985 twelve incidents were reported resulting in fifteen Israeli deaths.¹¹

The PLO knows that Israel will retaliate against terrorist activities in an effort to secure its citizenry against such brutality. The PLO uses this knowledge to provoke such retaliation in hopes of solidifying its base of support and stopping any action of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation.

To perform its terrorist acts against Israel, the PLO established a base of operations in Jordan in the village of Karameh, located in the Jordan Valley, north of the Dead Sea. Several smaller bases were established in a cluster around Karameh. Operational and training bases were located in Karameh and it was the departure point for most PLO raids on Israel, as well as the communications center for elements of the PLO operating on the West Bank.¹²

The Israeli army was aware of the existence of Karameh and recognized the strategic importance of the base to PLO operations. Israeli planners considered it a proper military target, especially since most of the population had fled, leaving the village almost entirely populated by

PLO operatives or their supporters. The final episode that provoked Israel into acting against the base occurred on March 18, 1968. On that day an Israeli school bus traveling near the Jordanian border south of the Dead Sea ran over a mine planted by the PLO. Two adults were killed and twenty-nine youngsters were injured. The decision was made to wipe out Karameh, the source of intolerable terrorist harassment.¹³

At dawn on March 21, Israel launched its attack against Karameh. It began with a column of Israeli armored vehicles crossing the Allenby bridge into Jordanian territory. Another force crossed the Damiyah Bridge nineteen miles to the north, while a third force, consisting of airborne troops in helicopters, was assigned rearguard actions aimed at closing off approaches to the village during the actions.¹⁴

The Israelis made several mistakes in the attack on Karameh. They assumed that the Jordanian army would remain indifferent to the attack if it was not aimed at their army, and so directed that clashes with the Jordanian army were to be avoided. The Israelis went so far as to drop leaflets in Jordan and made announcements on Israeli radio declaring that its actions were intended as a police action against saboteurs in Karameh and was not aimed at regular Jordanian troops or at penetrating deep into Jordanian

territory. Despite this information and the obvious compliance by the Israeli army, Jordanian artillery opened up on Israeli units. The Israeli air force responded to this artillery attack and quickly silenced the guns. Jordan has never released the results of the air attack on their artillery units.¹⁵

Another Israeli mistake was that they engaged the enemy at several points outside the main objective. This allowed the PLO to fight a delaying action. Most Israeli casualties were taken in the marginal zones around Karameh. The village itself fell relatively easily, and had the Israelis driven their forces here initially, the resistance would have probably been quickly overwhelmed, resulting in fewer casualties.¹⁶

In Karameh, the plan was carried out as planned. The soldiers attacked and took prisoner those who surrendered. They were instructed to keep an eye out for Yasir Arafat, and his picture was distributed among the soldiers. Arafat, instead of remaining to fight, escaped with a close aide on motorcycles to Es-Salt, sixteen miles east. The actions continued for most of the day with the Israelis combing the surrounding area for PLO operatives. In all, 200 terrorists were killed and 128 were taken prisoner. A large quantity of arms was found in the remains of Karameh, including Soviet rocket launchers.¹⁷

Four Israeli tanks and two armored personnel carriers were damaged in the engagement and one burnt-out tank was left in Jordanian territory. The PLO proudly displayed it in Amman, along with the remains of the driver. One Israeli aircraft was lost but the pilot survived. Despite twenty-nine dead and sixty-nine wounded and the losses in equipment, the Israelis considered the attack a success.¹⁸

The PLO used Karameh as a great propoganda tool. Although the Arab side of the fighting was mainly carried out by the Jordanian army, with most of the PLO fleeing or hiding, the PLO called it a great victory over the invading Israelis. It was described as a joint battle in which the PLO and Jordanian army fought side by side and prevented Israeli tanks from entering Amman.¹⁹

Arab victims of Karameh were buried with full honors accompanied by mass processions. Yasir Arafat was elevated to the status of hero, despite his somewhat less than heroic actions. The event was called the "Alamo" of the Palestinian Arabs and was the event that put an end to the legend of an invincible Israeli army. The propoganda worked. According to the PLO, within forty-eight hours after the battle of Karameh five thousand new recruits applied to join its ranks.²⁰

From this example it is easy to see how the PLO can use Israeli reprisals to its benefit. Military victory is not needed as long as the PLO can convince Palestinians what it wants them to believe. Karameh did not result in any civilian injuries, but when these do occur the PLO is quick to use them as propoganda tools. The Israelis will most likely continue to retaliate against terrorist attacks and the PLO will continue to try to use this for propoganda.

Israel has reacted to the opportunistic terrorism of individuals by taking repressive measures against the Arab population. They arrest suspected troublemakers, deport some, and destroy houses of others.²¹ These policies have done tremendous damage to Israeli-Arab relations within Israel and Israel's international image. The PLO is no doubt delighted by this damage.

The PLO has used terrorist acts to silence opposition to their stand. From June 1967 to September 1979, more than 350 Arabs were killed and some 2,000 injured by PLO attacks. In addition, hundreds of Gaza residents were killed between 1968 and 1970 by the PLO. When, in 1968, the PLO Executive Committee earmarked fifteen collaborators with Israel for assassination, Sheik Hashem Khozander, the Iman of Gaza, who was known for his moderate views on the Palestinian question and his support

for the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, was on the list. He was killed the very next day on his way home from evening prayer. A PLO spokesman claimed responsibility for the attack and announced that his organization would continue to assassinate Arab leaders of whose political views it disapproved.²²

On the West Bank, the PLO threatened the lives of and attacked the homes of Aziz Shahada and Doctor M. Farouki, prominent figures who publicly expressed their support for the concept of a Palestinian state on the West Bank. Any suspicion of having connections with Israeli security agencies can result in death. In the fall of 1969 PLO operatives pretending to be Israeli soldiers killed six notables in the town of Halhul near Hebron. The assassins were captured a few months later and said that they received their instructions from a coded radio message from a PLO station in Cairo.²³

Perhaps the most telling episode of how far the PLO is willing to go is the case of the assassination of Ali al-Adhami, a Palestinian born in a refugee camp in Lebanon. He was a cartoonist working in London. In 1987, he began to focus his cartoons on the morality of top PLO leaders. The final straw was when he hinted in a cartoon that Arafat was having a relationship with a married woman. A death warrant was issued. On July 22, 1987, the warrant

was carried out. As al-Adhami made his way home on a London street, he was shot in the face and died.²⁴ The PLO had proven that it had a very long reach to protect the moral reputation of its leaders.

The PLO has even conducted assassinations of individuals within the PLO. In early 1978, the Abu Nidal Organization assassinated three prominent PLO officials who were allies of Arafat, resulting in Arafat's issuing a death warrant for Nidal. Late 1978 saw a temporary rapprochement, but the Abu Nidal Organization continues to target moderate Palestinian elements.²⁵

Clearly, the PLO has used terrorism to try to accomplish its political goal of becoming the representative of the Palestinian people. The obvious question is whether or not the PLO has achieved this goal.

In 1980 a poll was conducted by Dr. Walid Salim A-Tamimi, a prominent Kuwaiti professor, among 1,200 university students working or living in Kuwait (where they are exposed to more pro-PLO media than any other Arab country). The sample consisted of 400 Egyptians, 200 Palestinians, 200 Syrians, 400 Gulf residents, and a control group of 300 persons composed of the same proportion. He concluded :

...it turns out, then that it is not correct to say that the PLO gains the absolute support of the Palestinians themselves; and this gives rise to concern against the backdrop of attempts being made today to find an alternative to the PLO. Let the propoganda not lead us astray--danger lurks at the doorstep.

This conclusion refers to the question posed by the polling team: In your view, does the PLO constitute the representative of the Palestinian people? Only 50% of the Palestinians polled viewed the PLO as their representative while 45% view the organization as just one of the forces representing them. 26

This study implies that the PLO has enjoyed limited success. The PLO might be pleased with a 50% rate if the other 50% are silent. The study takes on more significance if one analyzes the time frame in which it occurred. The PLO was enjoying success in 1980 (for reasons that will be examined later). At this time it was accepted by the Arab nations and a large part of the international community as the legitimate representatives of the Palestinians. In this context a 50% acceptance rate on the part of the people it claims to represent appears to be less than substantial.

The greatest success enjoyed by the PLO is probably the continued rift between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Its acts of terrorism coupled with the harsh retaliations by the Israelis have halted efforts by either side for compromise on the Palestinian issue. The major strike of shop owners, known as intifada, although not a

terrorist act and so not covered in this paper, has served to prove the solidarity of the Palestinians. In 1976, when Israel allowed municipal elections on the West Bank, the Palestinians elected a slate of mayors who had campaigned on an openly pro-PLO platform. The problem the PLO will face in the future is whether its support is only through fear or genuine acceptance of it as representatives of the Palestinian cause.

The PLO has also used terrorism effectively to silence its opposition within the Palestinian community. It remains the only representative of Palestinian nationalism. If a more moderate group vies for the support of the Palestinians through legitimate peaceful means will the PLO become criminals in the eyes of the people it claims to represent?

The conclusion drawn is that the PLO has had limited success in the use of terrorism to achieve its political goal of representing the Palestinians. I believe that this success is tenuous at best and can be lost if a viable alternative presents itself.

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CHAPTER 4

THE PLO VERSES THE ARAB STATES:

A BATTLE TO REPRESENT THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

There are no differences between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese... we are one people. Only for political reasons do we carefully underline our Palestinian identity... Yes, the existence of a separate Palestinian identity is there only for tactical reasons...¹

This statement was made by Zohair Mushan, who headed Sa'iqa, a terrorist organization discussed in Chapter 2, until his assassination in 1979. The statement underlines the difficulty the PLO has when it tries to separate itself from other Arab states as the sole representative of the Palestinians. In fact the PLO has found itself at odds with Arab countries which have attempted to represent the Palestinians. This chapter will look at some of the actions taken by the PLO to separate itself from the control of these Arab nations.

It should be remembered that officially the PLO and its military arm, the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), were created by the Arab Summit Conference in Cairo in January 1964. The Arab League intended that it serve as a military

weapon in an attempt to destroy Israel.² At this time the concept of pan-Arabism was still alive. The PLO saw no problem with fighting alongside its Arab brothers and envisioned riding into a liberated homeland on the shoulders of the Arab liberators. The PLO had every reason to believe this. President Nasser of Egypt had claimed on Radio Cairo that the entire Arab nation would develop a fighting stand for the liberation of Palestine.³ Most Palestinians saw the recovery of their homeland as dependent upon the achievement of Arab power through Arab unity and, therefore, identified with pan-Arab parties which they believed to be seriously committed to the Palestinian cause.⁴

The PLO tied itself to this pan-Arab sentiment initially and conducted terrorist actions that were in line with Arab interests. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the initial PLO terrorist act performed against Israel was aimed at a very symbolic target, the irrigation system the Israelis had created using water from the Jordan River. The Arab Summit of 1964 had condemned this project and had even threatened to destroy the project.⁵ It was no accident that this was the initial target of the PLO, since at this time it was one that the Arab states wanted to attack, but were unable to without provoking war and

possible international condemnation. The PLO was the perfect weapon to employ against such a target.

The idea of pan-Arabism was proving to be a less than reliable source of strength. Although the idea was still alive in 1964, it was weakened in 1962 by the breakup of the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria. The success of the Algerians in winning their independence in 1962 after a long, bitter, and costly revolution seemed to indicate that Arab unity need not be a prerequisite for liberation and that a nation could struggle against foreign settlers by relying mainly on its own resources.⁶

1967 proved to be a transitional year for the PLO and its philosophy for the liberation of its homeland. In June of that year Arab armies suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Israeli army. The magnitude of the Arab defeat proved to the PLO how ineffective Arab political and military power was against Israel, and raised serious doubts about the traditional structures and philosophies with which the Arabs and Palestinians had identified. It demonstrated to the PLO the need for a more radical ideology. A proliferation of groups emerged which held views aimed at uniting the Palestinians to achieve their own independence and not at pan-Arabism, which had shown few real gains from a Palestinian perspective.⁷ The

PLO philosophy changed to the belief that only the Palestinians could liberate their homeland.⁸

Nevertheless, the PLO cannot totally separate itself from the Arab states. It must depend on these states for political, military, and financial support. The PLO has developed leverage and assets within the inter-Arab system, such as membership in the Arab League, and has used these to further its cause. However, Arab and Palestinian interests have frequently collided. The PLO has often resorted to the use of terrorism when these collisions occur. The relationship that the PLO has had with Jordan and Egypt provides some insight into how the PLO deals with an Arab nation that attempts to compete with it as the representative of the Palestinians, as in the case of Jordan, and how Egypt invoked the wrath of the PLO when it strayed from the doctrinal principles of the organization.

The modern relationship of Jordan and Palestine began in 1948 when Israel became an independent state. At that time King Abdullah, the first ruler of what was called Transjordan, annexed the part of Palestine on the Jordan River that had not been taken over by Israel, namely the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Jordan, under King Hussein, reluctantly entered the 1967 war against Israel and for its trouble lost the West Bank and East Jerusalem to the Israelis. Along with military and material losses, some

200,000 Palestinian refugees crossed the Jordan River to the East Bank. This influx, added to those who had fled Israeli occupation in 1948, brought the number to approximately one million people claiming Palestinian descent who live on the East Bank under Jordanian jurisdiction.⁹

King Hussein was especially saddened by the loss of East Jerusalem because it contained the Al-Asqua mosque and the Dome of the Rock--among the most sacred places in Islam. As a member of the Hashemite family from Mecca, he has always felt it his duty to recover East Jerusalem for the Arabs, although after the 1967 defeat he did not think it could be done by force. This sense of responsibility coupled with the large number of Palestinian refugees in his country, made King Hussein believe that he and his country best represented the Palestinian interests.¹⁰

Jordan's problems with its Palestinian population predate the formation of the PLO. In 1951, while attending service at the Al-Asqua mosque in Jerusalem, King Abdullah was shot by a Palestinian for betraying the Palestinian cause by attempting to make peace with Israel in secret meetings he had held with Golda Meir.¹¹ At the time of his execution the king was accompanied by his sixteen year old grandson, Hussein, who was to become king of Jordan in 1952. It is small wonder that Jordan was not totally

supportive of the 1964 initiative to form the PLO. While his country did afford an excellent location for a PLO base of operations, the king only allowed the PLO to operate out of his territory after it had averred in writing that it had no territorial claims on Jordan.¹²

The large population of Palestinian refugees in Jordan was a natural breeding ground for PLO operatives. As the PLO began to be successful, the ranks began to swell with enthusiastic combatants. The battle of Karameh and the accompanying propaganda was the height of PLO recruitment. The PLO, in order to maintain its independence, basically ignored the government infrastructure of Jordan and created a state within a state. The PLO answered only to members of its own organization. This was a source of frustration for the population and for the government to the extent that clashes broke out between the PLO and Jordanian army. This condition existed up until early fall of 1970, when matters came to a head in what has been called Black September.¹³

At this time the PLO, mainly Fatah, was trying to coordinate military and political authority for Palestinian resistance groups. A central committee was established in 1970 that brought about an unprecedented degree of unity, but it did not preclude independent action. Jordan's decision to accept a US initiative to explore the possibilities of a diplomatic settlement threw the entire

resistance movement into panic. On September 6, 1970, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), in an effort to sabotage any negotiations and bring down Hussein, hijacked three international airliners and flew two to the Jordanian desert. The PLO sought to distance itself from this action by suspending the PFLP from the central committee. This suspension was at best a futile effort and, as Hussein prepared to crush the challenge to his authority, the Palestinian forces, in order to survive, were united under the command of Arafat, who called for the overthrow of the Jordanian regime.¹⁴

Hussein attacked the PLO with relentless mortar and artillery fire for nine days. Palestinian dead and wounded numbered in the thousands. The Jordanians completely eliminated the Palestinian resistance from their borders in the summer of 1971. The surviving guerillas scattered into neighboring Arab countries. The main base for guerilla activities was moved to Lebanon. King Hussein established himself, for the time being, as a bitter enemy of Palestinian Arabs. The war also pointed out that the Palestinians could not count on Arab nations for support if interests did not coincide. While Arab nations did intervene politically, only Syria sent military support in the form of tanks marked as PLA units.¹⁵

PLO reaction to its defeat at the hands of the Jordanian army was to attack Jordan through terrorism. In July 1971, it targeted assets of the Royal Jordanian Airlines (Alia). Fatah attacked an Alia office in Rome and attacked an Alia plane at the Cairo airport. In August 1971, it hijacked an Alia plane to Algeria and attempted to hijack another plane from Beirut to Cairo in September.¹⁶

Wasfi Tell, the Prime Minister of Jordan, was the target of a PLO assassination on November 28, 1971. He was attacked on his way into the Sheraton Hotel in Cairo shortly after lunch with the heads of government of the Arab League. As he stepped into the foyer he was hit by five shots fired by four Black September gunmen. Tell was a close associate of King Hussein and known for his antagonistic view toward the Palestinian presence in Jordan. The PLO held him responsible for Hussein's decision to drive them out of Jordan. He was also held responsible for the torture and death of Abu Ali Iyad, one of the leaders of Fatah and a close associate of Arafat.¹⁷

Two unsuccessful attempts were made against Jordanian interests in London. On December 5, 1971, an assassination attempt was made on the life of the Jordanian Ambassador to the United Kingdom. Zaid Rifai had long been the chief of the King's personal staff before his embassy assignment. As he was being driven home to Palace Gardens

in Central London, a gunman waiting at a point where his car had to slow down to pass through a gate opened fire with machine guns. Ambassador Rifai escaped with a hand injury.¹⁸ An attack was attempted unsuccessfully against King Hussein's London residence in March 1972.¹⁹

After a significant gesture of mending fences, in 1974, the PLO and Jordan seemed to come to a somewhat uneasy peace. On 26-28 November 1973, at the Arab Summit in Algiers, a resolution was introduced which stated that the national rights of the Palestinians would be restored only in a manner decided by the PLO in its capacity as their sole representative. Jordan was one of the nations that did not endorse this resolution at the time, but in Rabat on October 27, 1974, King Hussein endorsed it and it was approved by the Arab League. This was a significant move by Jordan, since technically King Hussein had formally abandoned claim to the West Bank.²⁰

It seems to be an amazing transformation for Hussein to go from a violent enemy of the PLO to an advocate of its stature in the Arab world in just four years. Jordan was pressured by the other Arab states to endorse the resolution. Of more significance is the fact that terrorist activities against Jordan ceased after 1974. It is not hard to draw a conclusion that the two events are related. The PLO was able to use its terror tactics as one

of the tools to achieve its political goal of being the sole representative of the Palestinians in the Arab world.

Another instructive relationship to look at is the one between the PLO and Egypt. Egypt has long been considered the largest and most powerful Arab state, and the Palestinians have turned there for support in their struggle against Israel. Nasser's pan-Arabist policies and his support for guerilla activities from Gaza became a source of inspiration for a wide range of Palestinian leaders. Egypt was a major force behind the formation of the PLO.²²

The Arab defeat in 1967 and Nasser's recognition of Egypt's military weakness caused him to seek other than military actions to resolve the hostilities between Israel and Egypt. Egypt's increasing willingness to consider the possibility of a negotiated settlement with Israel, its refusal to allow the PLO to launch major raids into Israel from its territory, and Egyptian hostility toward radical Palestinian groups created serious tensions between the PLO and Egypt. However, Arafat and Nasser needed each other and no formal break occurred.²²

The 1970s proved worse for PLO-Egyptian relationships. Nasser died in 1970 and his successor, Anwar Sadat, was more interested in advancing the interest of

Egypt than of the PLO or the Arab League. The October 1973 war was a strategic victory for Egypt and paved the way for the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979. This negotiation with Israel was obviously contrary to the philosophy of the PLO and brought PLO-Egyptian relationships to an all-time low. In fact there was a formal break in the relationship between the two members of the Arab League. Arafat has tried to maintain contacts with Cairo in hopes of improving the PLO's relationship with Sadat's successor, Husni Mubarak. A reconciliation has been slowed, however, by the PLO's insistence that Egypt abandon the Camp David accords and by the resolutions by the Palestinian National Council urging closer cooperation between Palestinians and Egyptian nationalist or anti-regime forces.²³

Although the PLO has mainly tried to use its political influence against Egyptian-Israeli relations, it has also used terrorism. In September 1975, a Fatah terrorist seized the Egyptian Embassy in Madrid and took six diplomats hostage. The terrorist threatened to kill the hostages unless Egypt withdrew from the ongoing Geneva talks and renounced its interim agreement with Israel. The hostages were taken to Algiers and released unharmed, and the peace talks continued.²⁴ On April 5, 1979 the PLO simultaneously bombed Israeli and Egyptian airline offices

in Cyprus. There were no casualties from the blasts.²⁵ The bloodiest attack was by Sa'iqa in July 1979. A terrorist occupied the Egyptian Embassy in Ankara, Turkey. Two guards were killed and twenty hostages taken. The hostages were later released.²⁶

The seriousness of these events should not be downplayed, but they appear mainly symbolic. The PLO obviously wanted to show its displeasure at Egyptian peace initiatives and sought to discourage other Arab states from doing the same thing. It also appeared that the PLO was showing restraint in the use of terrorism against a country it hoped to foster future relations with. The PLO has relied on political pressure from other Arab states to try to nullify the peace accords. Given the security and economic advantages Egypt enjoys from the Camp David accords, it is not likely to desert them.

These two examples show how the PLO has used terrorism to further its political aims with two Arab states. In the case of Jordan, the use of terrorism or perhaps the promise to refrain from terrorism produced positive results. In the case of Egypt, perhaps because of the long special relationship with the PLO and the limited number of attacks, terrorist acts had little if any effect. The PLO may be maturing to the stage where it recognizes when terrorism is an effective tool and when it is not.

The PLO relationship with other Arab states remains an ambivalent one. Formally the PLO was given sole representation of the Palestinians in 1974, but the issue remains secondary to the individual countries' agendas.

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CHAPTER 5

THE PLO ATTEMPTS TO CAPTURE INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

The action proves that the guerillas can continue the armed struggle to defend their right of representation. International recognition of the PLO will increase only by means of armed struggle, which must expand daily so that it may attain various revolutionary forms in the land of battle.¹

This statement was made on a PLO broadcast from North Yemen on April 13, 1975. The context was the justification of a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) attack on Qiryat Shemona in Israel, where eight children, eight civilians and two soldiers were killed.² Although the PLFP-GC was outside the control of the PLO, this statement of support underscores the fact that the PLO will support or use any means at its disposal, including terrorism, to achieve recognition of its intermediate goals and the ultimate establishment of a Palestinian state.

In the years before 1968, the PLO had limited its terrorist activities to targets within Israel. Beginning in 1968, it expanded its targets to international

dimensions. As stated earlier, their dependence on the Arab states had been shattered by the 1967 war. Following the model of the Algerian struggle seemed to be failing because of Israeli effectiveness in combating terrorism within its borders, and its policy of preemptive strikes against terrorist bases. Israeli Intelligence was proving very effective in providing information on PLO activities. These preemptive strikes were also having an effect on the governments of countries where PLO camps were located. The governments were concerned by the damage inflicted on their citizens and most feared the military power of the Israelis. Retaliation by Israel may have been one of the factors that finally convinced Hussein to take action against the PLO in 1970.³

Another reason for expanding activities into the international arena was competition for power within the PLO. By 1968, Arafat's Fatah had emerged as the main actor in the power and politics of the PLO and was receiving most of the publicity in the world press. In order to justify their existence, other groups also had to gain publicity for their real or imagined exploits. Unable to achieve this by direct guerrilla actions against Israel, they sought extreme and sensational methods. Strikes against international targets were tailor-made for such purposes. International targets allowed the operatives to avoid

Israel's defense forces and the restraints of host Arab governments.⁴

With this spectrum of reasons for the expanding its area of operations, PLO efforts were focused on three basic objectives: to sensitize the international community to the problem of the Palestinians, to secure widespread recognition as legitimate representatives with a key role in any negotiations, and to isolate Israel.⁵ Their operations have also succeeded in raising money through ransoms and gaining the release of operatives who have been jailed in other countries. The efforts of the PLO to internationalize their struggle began in 1968.

The Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) was the first PLO organization to strike. On July 18, 1968, a man dressed as a priest entered Israel's El Al Airlines office in Rome and purchased three tickets from Rome to Tel Aviv. On July 23, shortly after 1:00 A.M., an El AL Boeing 707 took off from Rome airport enroute to Lydda airport near Tel Aviv. The plane carried thirty-eight passengers and ten crew members. Twenty of the passengers were not Israelis and included seven priests on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Seated among the passengers were the holders of the three tickets purchased five days earlier. The plane was about to make one of the momentous flights in the history of terrorism.⁶

Twenty minutes after take-off, gun fire was heard from the cockpit. The hijackers had sat quietly in the first-class section until on signal they jumped up and forced their way into the cockpit. One of the pilots resisted and tried to disarm the hijackers. In the struggle he was struck on the head and face with a revolver butt. After the hijackers ordered the crew to fly to Algeria, two of them came out to confront the passengers with a revolver and hand grenade. The passengers were ordered to place their hands on their heads. One hijacker stepped over to the wounded pilot, now located in the passenger section, and rubbed his finger in the congealing blood around the Israeli's cuts. He then sucked the blood from his finger remarking how tasty he found the blood of Jews.⁷

The plane was flown to Maison Blanche airport in Algeria where the Jews were separated from the others and taken to an army camp near the airfield. The non-Israelis were freed and allowed to leave by other flights. The El Al plane and Jewish hostages were held for a month. With Italy acting as a intermediary, the plane and passengers were released in return for the freeing of several PLO operatives held in Israeli jails.⁸

International reaction to the incident was less than dramatic. The United Nations issued a statement deploring the incident. The statement issued was careful

not to lay any blame on the Algerian government. With the release of the non-Israeli passengers, world pressure on Algeria to release the remaining hostages all but ceased. Although the PFLP received negative publicity, a lack of firm and decisive action, even on the part of the Israelis, opened the door to other, more spectacular actions.⁹

The PFLP struck again on December 26, 1968. An El Al plane was parked on the runway at Athens International Airport when it was attacked by two Palestinian youths from Lebanon. The terrorists, armed with a machine gun and grenades, approached the plane as it was about to take off with both Israeli and non-Israeli passengers, and opened fire at close range on the passenger and pilot sections. Leon Shirdan, an Israeli engineer employed by the United Nations, was the only person killed in the attack. The terrorists were arrested by Greek authorities.¹⁰

This action provoked a reaction by the Israeli Defense Forces. Israeli intelligence had pointed to Lebanon as the country of origin for the terrorists and chose it for a retaliatory strike. On December 28, an heliborne raiding party landed at Beirut airport. The commandos gathered all passengers and airport personnel in the main hall while they blew up 14 planes belonging to Lebanon's Mideast Airways and other Arab lines. Within three days of the incident, the Security Council of the

United Nations passed a resolution condemning the Israeli action. No resolution was ever entered concerning the terrorist acts. France later announced an anti-Israeli embargo of certain military equipment would be instituted as a protest to the action.¹¹

The next Palestinian assault occurred on February 18, 1969, at Zurich airport. Four terrorists waited for an El Al plane to ready itself for takeoff when they opened fire with automatic weapons and incendiary grenades. A plainclothes, Israeli security guard jumped from the plane and killed the leader of the group. The other three were arrested by Swiss police as was the security guard. As a result of the attack two crew members were injured and one later died. The Palestinians were tried and sentenced to long prison terms. The security guard was released.¹²

On February 2, 1970, the PFLP-GC planted a bomb aboard a Swissair plane bound for Tel Aviv. The jet exploded in midair over Switzerland, killing all forty-seven passengers and crew members. Sixteen Israelis were among the dead. That evening the PFLP-GC broadcast a communique from Beirut claiming responsibility for the explosion. A week before the explosion, the Swiss embassy in Beirut had received a letter threatening to kidnap Swiss diplomats unless the terrorists imprisoned for an aircraft attack a year earlier were granted a new trial.¹³

In Athens in November, 1969, two terrorists belonging to Popular Liberation Front (PLF) threw grenades at an El Al office. Fourteen people, mostly Greeks were killed in the attack. The terrorists were arrested and sentenced. In July, 1970 these terrorists were released in response to the demands of PLO terrorists who had hijacked an Greek Olympic Airlines jet.¹⁴

On September 6, 1970, members of the PFLP simultaneously hijacked three airplanes. Two were flown to Jordan and one to Cairo. All three were blown up in front of a barrage of television cameras. 310 hostages were taken in the incident, but later released. To effect the release of the hostages Britain, West Germany, and Switzerland released certain PLO prisoners that were held in their respective prisons.¹⁵ The hijacking was a major factor in Jordanian actions against the PLO as addressed in chapter 4.

Plane hijacking and attacks on air terminals were only one aspect of the PLO's campaign of international terrorism. In Buenos Aires, the Israeli exhibit at a trade fair was set on fire, and at an international fair in Izmir, Turkey two terrorists were injured when a bomb they were trying to plant at the Israeli pavilion detonated prematurely. In London, a bomb was planted under the carpet in the reception area of the Israeli shipping lines

office. Israeli embassies were frequent targets. In Asuncion, capital of Paraguay, two terrorists broke into the Israeli Embassy and killed a clerk and seriously wounded a local employee. The embassies in Bonn and The Hague were bombed. Jewish communal and private institutions were also targeted. In Buenos Aires a Jewish school was burned. In Prague a synagogue was set afire and in West Germany several elderly Jews were killed when terrorists fired on an old age home. The Rothschild bank in Paris was attacked by terrorists with grenades.¹⁶

Perhaps the most spectacular international terrorist act committed by the PLO was executed on September 5-6, 1972, at the Munich Olympics. The Olympic Games had stood as a monument of world sportmanship and an arena for peaceful competition until that was shattered by the group calling itself Black September.

The Munich tragedy began around 4 a.m. on September 5th, when PLO terrorists, dressed in track suits and armed with Kalashnikov AK-47 assault rifles, climbed the six-foot-high fence surrounding the Olympic Village, and broke into the block housing of the Israeli Olympic team. Two individuals, an Israeli weightlifter and the wrestling coach, were killed during the break-in when they tried to resist. Nine athletes and coaches were taken hostage. The demands for release of the hostages included the release of

234 prisoners held in Israel and additional terrorists held in a German prison. After seventeen hours of negotiations, in which the Israelis refused to make any concessions, the terrorists and their hostages were flown in two helicopters to Furstenfeldbruck Airport, 15 miles from Munich, where a Boeing 727 was being prepared for their flight to Cairo. When four of the terrorists climbed out of the helicopters, they were engaged by German police marksman. In the exchange of fire, two of the terrorists were killed, others injured, and the two German helicopter pilots wounded. Shortly after midnight on September 6th, the German police launched an attack on the helicopters with six armored cars. The terrorists responded by destroying a helicopter containing five bound and gagged hostages. The four Israelis in the second helicopter were also killed. The remaining terrorists were captured and sentenced to prison terms in Germany.¹⁷

The PLO denied any connection with the attack on the Olympics and specifically with the Black September organization that claimed responsibility. Later intelligence and statements by members of the organization (as discussed in chapter 2) have tied them to Fatah, the primary organization of the PLO. The ability to separate themselves from this organization also allowed the PLO to

avoid the negative international response to the Munich Massacre.

The PLO officially renounced hijackings in 1974, having decided that hijackings had outrun their usefulness. Since 1978, PLO terrorist actions have mostly been limited to Israel or the occupied territories, with the obvious exception of the "Achille Lauro" seizure.¹⁸

Two questions must now be answered to bring this chapter to a logical conclusion. The first is, has the PLO has received any international recognition; and the second is, have its terrorists activities aided in this recognition?

The first question is relatively easy to answer. The PLO maintains 83 offices abroad (including one in New York and one in Washington, DC) and claims diplomatic relations with 112 countries. This relationship is several steps below full diplomatic status in most countries.¹⁹ But the recognition actually is greater than the number of countries that accept Israel.

International recognition was highlighted by Anafat's addressing the United Nations General Assembly on November 13, 1974 in his capacity as chairman of the PLO. On November 25, the UN issued a resolution on the question of Palestine. Among other statements the UN recognized the

right of the Palestinians to self-determination and recognized the PLO as the their representative. The PLO was also granted observer status at the UN, allowing it to participate in all international conferences convened under the auspices of the UN.²⁰ It should be noted that no other organization, outside of those actually representing a nation-state, have been granted this status.

The second question--the extent to which terrorism has contributed to international recogniton--is more difficult. The PLO uses other tactics, including legitimate diplomacy, in an attempt to gain recognition. Israel has accused some of the countries of recognizing the PLO merely to curry favor with Arab exporting states; Spain and Greece invited the PLO to open offices in their respective countries only after they had embarked on official campaigns for more trade with the Arab world.²¹ The "oil weapon" did prove an effective tool in 1973 when employed by the Arab states. The diplomatic victories have been achieved through a blend of legitimate means and terrorist activities.

The terror weapon has at the very least gained the attention of the world. We in the West seemed to be amazed by such dedication to a cause that life becomes secondary. Often the brutality of the act is forgotten in the quest to find out the motivation for such dedication and the

question as to whether the terrorist has legitimate complaints and how these grievances can be addressed. The terrorist can actually be viewed as the victim and not the perpetrator of an illegal violent act. The PLO seems to recognize this tendency and play on it. It also appears to be able to change tactics when appropriate, e.g., renouncing hijacking when publicity became too negative. The PLO also has the ability to claim that it had no knowledge of an act that is quickly criticized by the international community, such as the 1972 attack on the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics.

The terror weapon appears to be effective on the international scene. I believe that this effectiveness is enjoyed only when there is major support behind the movement. The PLO enjoyed this support from the Arab nations which possessed the "oil weapon" to enhance its international standing. The terror weapon must be backed by a legitimate political tool. Terror alone will have a negative impact. It must be used and renounced at the appropriate times. The PLO appears to be able to accomplish this fairly effectively. Its one failing is in dealing with the United States, which leads us to the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 6

THE BIG PRIZE:

RECOGNITION

BY THE US

... we will never accept any Arab state or international delegation to represent us - not as representatives, not as intermediaries either. The Americans have to get used to dealing with the PLO.¹

Arafat's personal spokesman, Mahmoud Labady, issued this ultimatum to insure all parties that the PLO was the sole representative of the Palestinian people. The prize of recognition by the United States appears to be an important one to the PLO. The status of the US as a superpower would probably suffice as a catalyst for this desire, but the seemingly unrelenting support offered to Israel by the US makes it a more strategically important target. If the US ceased to support Israel and pressured it instead to deal with the PLO, the PLO itself would have accomplished a major victory in its isolation of Israel.

Arafat himself sometimes appears almost obsessed with the notion of US recognition being afforded his organization. His schedule never appears too busy to see

every American churchman, civil rights leader or journalist who asks to see him. The conversation is never one sided, with Arafat interrogating them on the workings of American politics and then lecturing them for hours on the grievances of the Palestinians.²

The status of the US has caused it to be the target of terrorist activities by the PLO. On August 29, 1969, an American carrier, Transworld Airlines (TWA), became the first non-Israeli company to be hijacked by the PFLP. Three terrorists boarded the TWA Los Angeles to Tel Aviv flight during a stopover in Athens and hijacked the Boeing 707 to Damascus, where they blew up the cockpit. There were six Israelis on the flight--four women and two men. The women were released but the men were held in a Syrian prison for several months until they were traded for several Syrian soldiers who had been taken prisoner on Israeli territory.³

The September hijacking of four airliners by the PFLP as discussed in Chapter 5 included two American carriers, one TWA and one Pan American. American passengers were among the hostages, but no demands or negotiations were conducted with the US.

The Popular Struggle Front (PSF), a splinter group of the Palestine Liberation Front, kidnapped a US Army

colonel in Beirut in June 1975. They demanded humanitarian assistance, in the form of food, for Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut. When their demands were met they transferred the colonel to the PFLP-GC. He was later released.⁴

On June 16, 1976, the newly assigned US Ambassador to Lebanon, Francis Meloy, and his Economic Advisor, Robert Waring, left the underground garage at the US Embassy in West Beirut in a armored black cadillac. Ambassador Meloy had arrived just one month earlier and was getting acclimated to his new job. On this day he was scheduled to pay a courtesy call on the new president elect of Lebanon, Elias Saekis. The vehicle never arrived at its destination. Although the exact details are not known, the limousine was found deserted and the bodies of the diplomats and driver were later recovered.⁵ Fatah's second-in-command claimed credit for having directed the murder of the diplomats. This was an effort to provoke the US into intervening in Lebanon, with the aim of unifying the factions in that country against the US. The action was condemned by the US, but no action was taken against the terrorist.^{6 7}

US involvement in the Egypt-Israel peace treaty stimulated PLO activity. On March 7, 1979, the DFLP claimed responsibility for planting bombs in 3 Israeli

buses, resulting in 12 injuries. The reason for the attack was the visit of President Carter to Jerusalem. The PLO claimed credit for a bomb that exploded near Zion Square, which killed one and wounded 14 on March 23, 1979. The blast occurred shortly after Prime Minister Begin left for Washington to sign the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. On March 27, 1979, in an apparent reaction to the signing of the treaty bomb attacks occurred in Israel and Paris. The explosion in the Israeli town of Lod killed one and injured 21. In Paris a bomb thrown at a Jewish hostel for students injured two. The PLO denounced the Paris bombing. It is now believed to have been the work of Sai'qa.⁸

The seizure of the Achille Lauro is considered a PLO-US confrontation because an American was killed and because it provoked the US to action. The seizure began at 8:45 a.m. on October 7, 1985, when four Palestinians burst into the liner's dining room firing submachine guns and wounding two of the passengers. The four men took over the ship containing 427 passengers and 80 crew members and demanded the release of 50 Palestinians being held in Israel. The negotiations did not go well and the terrorists reacted by killing an American invalid, Leon Klinghoffer, age 69. They then forced two crewmen to throw the body overboard. The liner was refused permission to dock at Tartus in Syria and sailed back to Port Said,

Egypt. The terrorists had held the liner for three days with no apparent progress in having their demands met. In Egypt, Abu Abbas, head of the PLF and a senior member of the PLO executive, convinced the terrorists to surrender to Egyptian authorities.⁹

The terrorists were not arrested by Egyptian authorities but allowed to fly to Tunisia aboard a Boeing 737 along with Abu Abbas on the evening of October 10. The aircraft was intercepted by four American F-14 warplanes from the US aircraft carrier Saratoga and forced to land at Sigonella NATO base on Sicily. In Sicily, the US Delta Force and the Italian authorities argued over who could arrest the terrorists. Only intervention by President Reagan caused the Delta Force commander to allow Italian forces to take custody. ¹⁰

Egypt denounced the actions of the US as piracy. Italy released Abbas angering the US and leading to the resignation of the Italian Minister of Defense which further led to the collapse of Italy's coalition government. Abu Abbas later admitted that the seizure of the liner was a failure in mission. The terrorists were supposed to conduct a suicide raid on the Israeli port of Ashdod, but they were discovered cleaning their weapons and so took over the ship.¹¹

The use of terrorism by the PLO against American targets has proven to be detrimental to its cause. The US refuses to negotiate with what President Reagan referred to as "a gang of thugs."¹² The US government's official stand is that the PLO is a terrorist organization and, based on its policy not to negotiate with terrorists, the US government has continually tried to find other intermediaries to represent the Palestinians. Jordan and Egypt have attempted unsuccessfully to fill this role. In 1976, American officials led by former Secretary of State George Shultz went to the West Bank and Gaza in an attempt to find Palestinians with whom to talk as a substitute for the unacceptable PLO. Palestinians in the territories refused to even meet with the delegation, telling it that the PLO would have to be the negotiators in any solution to the Palestinian question.¹³

The question of negotiations between the PLO and the US has remained open since it was addressed in some detail by Henry Kissinger in 1975. He laid down three preconditions that the PLO must meet before the US will recognize the organization and open official talks: (1) accept UN Security Council resolutions 242, establishing the state of Israel, and resolution 338, calling for cessation of all military actions in the Middle East and direct negotiations between combatants, (2) unequivocally

accept Israel's right to exist, and (3) renounce terrorism.¹⁴

In November 1988, the Palestine National Council, meeting in Algiers, adopted resolutions that basically met the preconditions of PLO-US dialogue. On December 14, 1988, George Shultz announced that the United States would establish contacts with the PLO.¹⁵ Dialogue was opened between the two parties in February, 1989, in Tunis.¹⁶

The PLO had realized one of its major political goals: recognition by the US government. The PLO only accomplished this by renouncing terrorism. An aborted raid on Israel by Palestinians, and Arafat's refusal to renounce the action led to the suspension of talks, but the opening of talks, was a significant event. The terrorist tactic employed by the PLO may have outlived its usefulness. It will be both instructive and important to see if the PLO can transfer itself into a peaceful "parliament in exile."¹⁷

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¹ Doyle McManus, "PLO: Still Odd Number in Equation," Los Angeles Times, June 21, 1981, 5.

² Doyle McManus, "Durable Arafat a Politician at Peak of Power," Los Angeles Times, June 21, 1981, 7.

³ Zeev Schiff and Raphael Rothstein, Fedayeen: Guerillas Against Israel (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1972), 139

⁴ Terrorist Group Profiles (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1990), 29.

⁵ Neil C. Livingstone and David Halevy, Inside the PLO (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986), 94.

⁶ Yonah Alexander, "The Nature of the PLO: Some International Implications," Middle East Review, 12 (Spring 1980): 49.

⁷ An interesting sideline to this murder was that at the time of the incident, the PLO was the only functioning police force in the area surrounding the embassy. The US Embassy had no direct contact with the PLO at the time. American diplomats did establish contact later through an intermediary at the British Embassy and were told that the life of Ambassador Meloy might have been saved if the contact had been made earlier. (Doyle McManus, "U.S., PLO: 7 Years of Secret Contacts," Los Angeles Times, July 5, 1981, 17)

⁸ Alexander, 49.

⁹ George Rosie, The Directory of International Terrorism (New York: Paragon House, 1987), 39.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 40.

¹² Mcmanus, "U.S., PLO: 7 Years of Secret Contacts," 15

13 Ghassan Bishara, "Palestinians and the PLO: Truth vs. Perception," American-Arab Affairs, 28 (Spring 1989), 92.

14 Stephen Greene, "U.S.-PLO Talks: Just a First Step," American-Arab Affairs, 27 (Winter 1988-89), 53.

15 Ibid.

16 "U.S. opens dialogue with PLO," Statement by Ronald Reagan and George Shultz, (Department of State Bulletin, February 1989), 51

17 The Palestinian Liberation Organization: A Brief Survey (Washington, DC: Palestine Information Office), 1.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has used the PLO as a case study to address whether terrorism can be used as a tactic to accomplish political goals. There is no doubt that the PLO has been successful in this. It has risen from a disorganized array of activists to an internationally recognized representative of the Palestinian people. This takes on more significance when the internationalization of terrorism or the "terror network" is considered. The PLO does not operate within a vacuum. It is not only studied by other terrorist groups, but also shares information and training with these organizations. This naturally leads to the conclusion that if the PLO has been successful in the use of terrorism, then other groups will resort to this tactic.

The PLO was created by the Arab League in 1964 in an effort to organize Palestinian resistance groups into another armed force in their war on Israel. From these beginnings, the PLO has taken on a life on its own, often at odds with its creators. The PLO has emerged as the only recognized representative of the Palestinian cause, often using terrorism to silence opposing views or competing interests. Its dominance in this representation is best

exemplified by the failure of the US to find an alternative intermediary, despite major attempts to do so. In 1974, the Arab League endorsed the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian cause.

The PLO has been successful on the international scene as well. In 1974, Arafat, in his capacity as chairman of the PLO, addressed the United Nations Security Council and was granted observer status. Approximately 120 countries have given the PLO some form of diplomatic recognition. Although not officially recognized by the US until 1988, the PLO has for a long period operated information offices in New York and Washington, D.C. A significant diplomatic victory, recognition by the US, required the PLO to renounce terrorism.

Assessing what role terrorism has had in the success of the PLO is a difficult proposition. The PLO does not limit its pursuit of political objectives to the use of terrorism. It has set up a form of a government in exile and attempts to pursue objectives on more legal terms than through the use of terrorism. I believe that the PLO has used terrorism effectively. Terrorism has gained attention for the PLO cause and has contributed to the isolation of Israel. It has helped the PLO present itself as the only representatives of the Palestinians, and maintain a high degree of international attention to its

demands. Practitioners of terrorism will be quick to pick up on these successes and emulate them.

Most terrorist acts are covered extensively by the media. The media not only show the results of the event, but will publicize the demands and opinions of the terrorists if possible. The international news media afford the terrorist the ability to capture the attention of the world quickly. A wise terrorist will use this exposure to let the world know of the alleged oppression or conviction that led to this act. The West is naturally curious about the dedication of individuals who risk their lives for a cause. This curiosity can lead to more in-depth media attention to the group allowing it a perfect propaganda opportunity. Excessive loss of civilian lives can have a negative effect, so targets are selected carefully for the best results.

The terrorist cannot rest at simply gaining the attention of the world. Once the initial curiosity or attention has worn off, another act must be committed to maintain the level of interest. The Western hostages in Lebanon are a good example of how to maintain interest. The holders of the hostages do not have to perform another act of terrorism; they simply remind the world that they still hold the hostages by releasing photos or threatening to abuse or kill one of them. The terrorist has to be

careful that his acts do not result in negative publicity or, if they do, he must be able to maintain a certain degree of plausible deniability. The PLO, because of its segmented nature, is adept at doing this.

The PLO has been successful at isolating Israel. The tourist industry suffers in that people are afraid to travel to a troubled part of the world. Although no statistics are available on whether El Al suffered a drop-off in airfares during the height of hijackings, it is probable that this did occur. The terrorist can isolate its target in the same way. Foreign investment needed by some developing countries can be hindered by an atmosphere of violence or fear of violence. Terrorists can target foreign economic projects in countries to ensure this isolation.

Perhaps the most effective use of terrorism by the PLO is the total lack of any other intermediary for the Palestinian cause. It has carried this to the extreme in killing even cartoonists who represented the PLO in a bad light. If a more conservative, legal representative was able to achieve the same goals, a terrorist would have difficulting gaining support for their cause, if in fact they need or want support. Assuming that political recognition is one of the goals, the idea of being the sole

representative is significant. Any competition for that recognition has to be silenced or rendered ineffective.

Terrorism will continue to plague the world. One individual within national boundaries who feels that he has been mistreated and resorts to violence is a problem for law enforcement agencies. A group of individuals with access to the world arms market, enjoying some form of financing, and possessing a fanatical dedication to a cause is infinitely more dangerous and difficult to deal with. Only through international cooperation can terrorism be effectively countered. The terrorist is adept at using international borders, due to a lack of such cooperation, as security areas. He can easily pass over international borders where he is free from retribution from the national authorities in the target country. Israel has violated international borders in an attempt to combat terrorism, often receiving more international condemnation for its retribution than the terrorist has for his act of violence. The international community must not only condemn terrorism, but also the countries that support it. Political and economic pressure or isolation can be used against supporting countries.

Terrorism is a difficult problem to solve, but not an impossible one. It must be recognized for what it is--international crime--and combatted accordingly.

EPILOGUE

This paper was originally intended to cover the PLO's activities up to 1988, when the US opened official talks with representatives of that organization. However, recent events having a significant impact on the PLO need to be addressed.

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait. Members of the Special Operations Group of the PLO preceded the attackers into the city and acted as an advanced guard. They marked routes into Kuwait City, designated the most direct approaches to key targets such as the Emir's palace, the Ministry of Defense and the Central Bank of Kuwait, and marked the homes of prominent citizens with black Xs. In the middle of August, two regiments of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) became part of the occupying forces. They were accompanied by their families, suggesting that they were being used to "colonize" Kuwait, then named by Iraq as its nineteenth province.¹

Arafat declared unflinching support of Iraq and its actions against Kuwait. He repeatedly stated that Palestine and Iraq stood "in the same trench to regain Arab

rights"2. In accord with this view, Palestinians in Israel and the West Bank, refused to wear gas masks issued them by the Israelis and actually stood on rooftops in Tel Aviv cheering as Scud missiles were fired at Israel.3.

In late January, 1991, the PLO launched a campaign of guerilla attacks into Israel from Jordan in an attempt to force Israel into the Gulf War. Western intelligence sources indicate that Saddam Hussein gave the PLO direct orders to open a second front against Israel, adding to the Scud attacks.4

This course of action taken by the PLO has proven reckless, destructive, and ultimately self-defeating. At the beginning of 1990, the PLO seemed to be winning on the diplomatic front mainly due to harsh Israeli handling of intirada incidents. It could be argued that the PLO was closer than ever before to accomplishing its ultimate goal, the establishment of a Palestinian state. For the time being that dream is dead. The PLO's participation in the rape and destruction of Kuwait, and its alliance with Saddam Hussein, have pitted it not only against the West, but against a number of major Arab regimes, to include one of its major financial supporters, Saudi Arabia. Kuwait, a one time strong supporter of the PLO, will not likely welcome the PLO and perhaps not even individual Palestinians into a rebuilt Kuwait.5 King Hussein of Jordan

has also reclaimed influence to the West Bank which he had previously relinquished in favor of the PLO.⁶

The PLO must have believed that the Iraqi dictator would be successful. By attaching itself to him, it hoped to share in his victories and accomplish its dream of a national homeland achieved through his military power. The PLO left no diplomatic out for itself in case Saddam was unsuccessful, and so saw its dream go down in his defeat. All the advancements enjoyed by the PLO since its beginning are now in jeopardy. The PLO has lost much of its Arab support and international standing. Political alliances in the Middle East can change quickly, but the PLO will feel the results of its grave miscalculation for some time. The Palestinian issue will be a prominent subject for a while but it appears unlikely that the PLO will be invited to the bargaining table. As events now stand, it appears that only a drastically reformed PLO headed by new leaders will be acceptable to the victors of the Gulf War.⁷

ENDNOTES

¹ Neil C. Livingston and David Halevy, "Saddam's New Minions: How the PLO Came to be Owned by Baghdad," Counterinsurgency & Security (March/April 1991): 9.

² Ibid.

³ Stephen E. Winn, "The Palestinians Jeopardize Their Cause," The Kansas City Star, February 10, 1991: 1k.

⁴ Livingston and Halevy, 8.

⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁶ "King Hussein Weighs Claim to West Bank," The Kansas City Star, March 30, 1991: 8a (Reprinted from a article in The Washington Post)

⁷ Livingston and Halvey, 12.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

- ALF..... Arab Liberation Front- An Iraqi controlled organization under the PLO umbrella with pan-Arab orientation formed in 1969.
- DFLP..... Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine- Marxist-Leninist organization that split from PFLP in early 1968; has membership on PLO executive committee.
- Fatah..... Largest, wealthiest, most influential PLO group created in 1959.
- FRC..... Fatah Revolutionary Council- The organization led by Abu Nidal that split from Fatah in 1974. Presently is not under PLO control.
- PLF..... Palestine Liberation Front- Created in 1977 as a splinter group from PFLP-GC; not represented on PLO Executive Committee, but is under PLO umbrella.
- PSF..... Palestine Struggle Front- Syrian influenced splinter from PLF. What influence the PLO has over its activities is unclear.
- PFLP..... Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine- Founded in late 1967; the second largest member of PLO.
- PFLP-GC..... Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine- General Command- Split from PFLP in 1968; emphasizes military strategy; not presently under PLO umbrella.
- RPCP..... Revolutionary Palestine Communist Party- The communist wing of PLO; not known to have preformed any terrorist actions.
- Sai'qa..... Terrorist organization created by Syrian Ba'th party in 1968; represented on PLO Executive Committee.

APPENDIX B

CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT PLO EVENTS

DATE	EVENT
1964	PLO created by Arab Summit
1965 Jan 2	Fatah performs first terrorist act against Israel
1969	Fatah dominates PLO: Yasser Arafat elected Chairman
1970	Central Committee created by PLO bringing about unprecedented unity.
1970 Sept	Black September. PLO is expelled from Jordan, moves base to Lebanon. Fatah's influence over PLO is strengthened, PFPL and DFLP lose credibility, minor groups are eliminated.
1972 Sept	Munich Olympics attack.
1973	Split in PLO over future tactics. Fatah endorsed a phased political policy recognizing that Palestine may not be liberated all at once- limited objectives. An anti-Fatah coalition, PFLP, PSF, PFLP-GC and ALF endorsed total victory. PFLP bolted from Executive Committee meeting in 1974 and no meeting of the committee occurred until 1977.
1974	Arafat addresses UN, granted observer status.
1975	Lebanese civil war. This conflict exacerbated internal division within the PLO, triggered conflict with Syria, and diverted attention from its diplomatic and military offensive against Israel.
1975-1979	PLO intensifies campaign to gain attention abroad.
1976	PLO granted membership in nonaligned nations.

DATE	EVENT
1977	Camp David Accords.
1978	Four prominent Fatah officials assassinated by FRC.
1979	Arafat received by Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky- the first time a European head of government had officially met the PLO leader on the continent.
1982	Israel invades Lebanon and expells PLO.
1987	Tripoli Document signed ending internal conflicts in PLO.
1988	PLO-US talks in Tunisia.

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PREFACE TO BIBLIOGRAPHY

For the purpose of reviewing the literature used in this paper, the sources--books, periodical articles and government publications--will be considered in three groupings: those dealing with the history of the region, terrorism in general, and the PLO in particular.

Those dealing with history were used to get a background of the area to understand the present situation. Several sources were used to confirm data and ensure the author was unbiased in reporting the facts. Collectively they provided the requisite background. Four basic sources were used: Armageddon in the Middle East by Dana Adams Schmidt, Thomas Kiernan's The Arabs, Sydney Nettleton Fisher's The Middle East, and The Arab-Israeli Wars by A. J. Barker.

There are a number of excellent works addressing the subject of terrorism. One source, George Rosie's The Directory of International Terrorism, was especially useful. This book contains a short narrative on most known terrorist groups and their activities. It is an excellent reference book.

Christopher Dobson and Ronald Payne have combined efforts to produce two excellent informative books entitled War Without End and Counterattack. Both writers possess a wealth of information on the subject of terrorism and along with extensive research make for informative reading. War Without End ends with a chronology of terror that gives a concise look at terrorist activities from 1967 to 1987. Claire Sterling has also written a very informative book entitled The Terror Network. She does an excellent job of tracing terrorism from its beginnings to the internationalization of it. The one weakness in her book is her obsession with tying the Soviet Union to every terrorist organization. This had no effect on my research; however, since the sponsorship of terrorism was not covered in the scope of this thesis. Best Laid PLans by David C. Martin and John Walcott and Final Warning by Robert Kupperman and Jeff Kamen proved to be marginally useful in my research.

Works on the PLO were extensive. They ranged from documents put out by the PLO itself, advertising it as a repressed government in exile, to works by Israeli authors accusing the PLO of carrying Joseph into exile and attempting an assassination against Abraham. Fedayeen, written by Zeev Schiff and Raphael Rothstein, two Israelis, produced the best narrative of terrorist activities. These proved helpful; however, their analyses were somewhat slanted. Aaron David

Miller's The PLO and the Politics of Survival dealt with the political side of the PLO extensively and was very useful in research of that aspect.

The best source of information was periodicals. These gave both sides a voice and offered good analyzes. The Middle East Review and American-Arab Affairs were used extensively. They offered articles by authors with various views and so proved helpful in getting a comprehensive picture. A series of articles published in the Los Angeles Times provided current information on the PLO.

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